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Our first priority at this most dreadful moment in world history is to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathies to Ukrainian students and staff at our university. But this has to be closely followed by extending sympathies of a quite different kind to the Russian students and staff who are equally part of our university community.

It may just be possible for the rest of us to imagine the state of mind of the Ukrainians, comparable perhaps to the fear, isolation and feelings of dread concerning the survival of family members we initially experienced during the pandemic. But for the Russians our sympathies are going to be more complicated.

They too are isolated – perhaps not now able to return to Russia for the foreseeable future – and probably in fear of what might be to come. But, having been brought up under a political system that forces blinkered compliance, their attitude to current events may well be mixed. Some may even support the Putin position, while those who condemn what Putin has done may be all too aware of the risks they would run if they speak out. We must be careful, despite the anger we may well feel, to respect the complexities of their positions. The Vice-Chancellor has personally written to each Ukrainian and Russian member of staff.

We have all probably been taken by surprise and have had suddenly to recognise the limitations of our own perspectives that are now revealed as we have to reap-

War in Ukraine

praise what was long in plain view; how Putin has promoted his policies through lies, suppression of free speech and the secret police. Not that this scenario was unknown to us from history, but our own narrow interests combined with wishful thinking have blinded us.

In Russia itself well over 15,000 medical professionals have signed a letter to President Putin:

"At this difficult time for both countries, we call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for resolution... Human life is priceless. It takes a moment to be killed in action... And for the moments of today's war, we will pay for many years after.... we demand an immediate suspension of all operations with the use of lethal weapons"

We know what individual courage such a move requires. Eventually Putin may have to listen.

We in the University have a special duty, as always, to preach and demonstrate free speech. This is the most important form of 'soft power' that the UK can exert and no more effectively so than by way of its universities, from where our overseas graduates return home and, bit by bit, seed the same values even in the most dictatorial of regimes.

B.B., T.J.H

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Communications in Time of War

PETER OPPENHEIMER

“Far-away countries of which we, er, know quite enough to be concerned” is probably the typical British reaction to Russia invading Ukraine. Certainly, the flood of donations of both cash and goods for Ukrainian refugees to places like the White Eagle club in South London is impressive, and by no means attributable simply to personal acquaintance with those suffering or under threat. Even where personal connections are significant, as in my own case, they merge into more diffuse feelings for humanity at large, akin to a kind of spiritual mobilisation.

Earliest, pre-school memories of World War II evacuation in North Devon come trickling back. And from several decades later, I find myself extracting the old vinyl recording of Haydn’s wonderful *Missa in Tempore Belli* (Mass in Time of War – in German, *Paukenmesse*: Kettle-drum or Timpani Mass) performed by the Leipzig Radio Choir and Staatskapelle Dresden under Sir Neville Marriner, one of the composer’s astonishing six last masses composed between 1796 and 1802, each one to celebrate the name-day of Princess Marie Hermenegild, wife of Prince Nicolaus II Esterhazy, Haydn’s long-standing patron.

What is the relevance of that, for heaven’s sake? Well, name-day is a prominent occasion in Russian and Ukrainian cultures too. They even have a special, *pluralia tantum* word for it – *именины*, in Cyrillic. Furthermore, Russians over the past three centuries have been plainly in the front rank of contributors to European and world culture generally – not only in music, but in literature, the visual and performing arts, mathematics, the physical and biological sciences... Yet Russia has remained chronically unable to construct a society civilised in its respect for the sovereignty of law, for individual rights, and for political boundaries both philosophical and physical. It is this dichotomy which makes Russia the mystery famously articulated by Winston Churchill*.

The mystery is only intensified by the fact that Russia has not lacked, and does not lack, courageous dissenters. A person like Alexei Navalny may be exceptional – though by no means unique (cf. Andrei Sakharov, Anatoly [Natan] Sharansky, the Medvedev brothers and many others...). But the present crisis of aggression against Ukraine is calling forth widespread declarations of protest, whose authors risk dismissal, imprisonment or worse. Street demonstrations (and prompt arrests) aside, anyone attempting on the fifth day of Russia’s invasion to go on-line to read *Izvestiya* was instead confronted with the following manifesto, signed “Concerned Journalists of Russia”:

“Dear citizens, We call on you to halt this madness, not to send your sons and husbands off to certain death. Putin is compelling us to tell lies and exposing us to danger. We’re being isolated from the whole world, people have stopped buying [our] oil and gas. In a few years’ time we shall be living like the North Koreans. For what purpose? To get Putin into the textbooks? This is not our war, let us stop him.... This communication will be taken down, and some of us sacked or even imprisoned. But we can no longer put up with it....”

There are also private, individual, person-to-person communications. In the age of mobile phones, the internet and social media (even with restricted access), parallels with earlier generations are difficult to gauge. I recall my first visit to Moscow in a student group in 1960 – the days of Khrushchev, two years before the Cuba missile crisis. My Russian Oxford landlady (as it happens, my future mother-in-law) told me how to contact specific old friends of hers: call from a phone box, not from your hotel – don’t give surnames, just say “It’s Peter, from Lydia” – and make clear that you know how to find them, not stating the address.... In those days Russian citizens fell under suspicion for having unauthorised or unsupervised contact with foreigners. In the 2020s the touch-paper is contact of Russians with one another. How long will swathes of Russian citizenry continue to believe the mind-boggling lies served up to them on state-controlled TV, when they or their neighbours can telephone friends and relatives across Ukraine – or indeed receive calls from conscript sons and grandsons injured or taken prisoner without having been made aware of what mission they were involved in? Former British ambassador Sir Roderic Lyne suggested to Radio 4 listeners on 3rd March that the mobile phone was liable sooner or later to play a key role in Putin’s downfall.

Other items add to the general picture. The turmoil of refugee families within Ukraine and across its western borders in vast numbers is being amply reported. They include at least one former supervisee of mine, with his wife, two children and two sets of grandparents, at present squeezed into different premises near the Rumanian border, while other relatives are stuck in basements in Kyiv. Not quite as well known is the ominous fact that in Russian cities males up to almost pensionable age have been ordered to remain available for possible conscription. How many will manage to escape to Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan or other accessible territories of the former Soviet Union is a matter of speculation.

Finally, a concluding item of – I believe – considerable significance. When Putin seized the Crimea in 2014, few Russians, even in thinking sections of society, viewed the matter with great seriousness let alone foreboding. “The Crimea is ours – or not ours?” was a topic rather of semi-jocular debate. The debate, moreover, ignored the simultaneous forcible takeover by Russian separatists of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine. It was easier, less disturbing, to regard this as just an internal problem for Ukraine, nothing basically to do with Russia. The magnitude, and irresponsibility, of this self-deception is no longer in doubt. The question now is when, if ever, the world will be prepared to resume anything like its previous engagement with Russia’s economy and finances.

* “A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”.

The *It Happens Here* Project

TIMEA ILIFFE AND NICOLA SHARP

On 22nd February The Oxford Mail carried the following headline: "Oxford University accused of creating 'culture of cover ups' where students told to 'keep quiet'". As editors we thought it important to clarify some student views on the problem raised here.

Can you tell us about the project, please, and how you came to be involved?

Timea: *It Happens Here* is an autonomous, student-led, elected campaign affiliated with the Oxford University Students' Union. Our mission is to fight sexual harassment and violence wherever it occurs, as well as supporting survivors and raising awareness of the issue. We run a range of projects, including welfare and support events, lobby colleges and the University for change, sharing resources and creating safe spaces for survivors to share their stories. I first learnt about *It Happens Here* through the Feminist Society; I'd been involved with that previously, and *IHH* seemed like the perfect place to put my interests in intersectionality and liberation into practice, and to create real, tangible change at the institution I was a part of.

Nicola: One aspect of the campaign is creating a safe space for survivors' voices, such as in the *Letters for Survivors* magazine and @survivingoxford Instagram page. The anonymous testimonies of students stand in harsh contrast to the glowing reputation of our university, but there is no doubt that this is not simply an Oxford problem. It is one deeply embedded in every community, every institution and every country.

Being able to talk about this issue is an important step forward. From Christine Ford's testimony against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh in 2018 to the assault and death of Sarah Everard in 2021, it is clear that the topic of sexual violence has been drawn sharply in the public eye, where finally the systems that enable sexual misconduct at this university can be dissected, evaluated, and deemed worthy of change.

For a long time after my own troubling experience, I consciously drew away from activism in the hope that it would give me space to heal. In reality, changemaking has been the most effective form of healing. It started with small steps, like running a consent workshop and making welfare cards in St Hugh's College to raise awareness about sexual assault and health resources. Joining *It Happens Here* was like taking a final, running leap – and it has done the most to transform my perspective on the future. Working with such a passionate, driven team has shown me that there is momentum growing – from alumni to students to staff – to transform the rape culture we have normalised into a modern, inclusive culture of consent. A lot of trust has been placed with *It Happens Here* to represent the student body in achieving this goal. Our campaign's

hope is to not only change the *status quo* in Oxford, but to set a powerful precedent for others.

The recent reports in the local and national press suggested that there is a low rate of recorded incidents of sexual violence at the University of Oxford. Why do you think that's a problem?

Nicola: There is one mantra that every Biomedical Sciences student lives by: "question everything." You don't have to be an expert to see that the number of reported incidents is surprisingly low, especially compared to other information we have about sexual assault.

Firstly, sexual assault is not rare. In the UK, 618,000 women and 155,000 men experienced rape or sexual assault in the year 2019-2020. That's more than 70 women in England and Wales experiencing at least one of these offences every hour.

Secondly, the majority of the student body is within the age group most likely to experience and to commit sexual assault.

- In the latest edition of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (2020):
 - almost 9 out of 10 victims are between 16-34 years old (and 1 in 4 between 20-24 years old).
 - almost 2 out of 3 victims report that the perpetrator was a male aged between 20-39 years old.
- Data from the Department of Justice (1997) show that:
 - the majority of sexual assault victims are under the age of 30.
 - females aged 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. (Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sex Offenses and Offenders (1997)).

Thirdly, sexual violence is especially pervasive in higher education. The clearest data we have around may be from the USA:

- among undergraduate students, 26.4% of females and 6.8% of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (9.7% and 2.5% for graduate and professional students, respectively). (Source: campus climate survey by The Association of American Universities).
- whereas female college-aged students (18-24) are 20% less likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of rape or sexual assault, male college-aged

students (18-24) are 78% more likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of rape or sexual assault. (source: National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013, via the U.S. Department of Justice Report and RAINN)

Altogether, although the University of Oxford formally declares a low number of sexual assault cases, it is highly unlikely that the number is truly so much lower than the baseline of what we would expect.

We must therefore consider the possibility that their system of data collection is flawed. And it is probably flawed, in an abundance of ways. The most pressing of which is that – even when you ignore the profound effect of underreporting – many reports are absorbed into the college reporting system, which runs and concludes its own investigations independently of the University.

These invisible cases tell a very different story about the safety of this university.

What is the role of colleges and the collegiate structure in tackling sexual violence?

Timea: The collegiate structure is one of the biggest challenges we and other activists come up against when trying to make change at Oxford. Each college operates as its own legal entity, with its own harassment policy, welfare structure and disciplinary procedure, not to mention its own staff and administration, who can range from supportive and progressive, to deeply conservative or unhelpful. This means that survivors' experiences are often too dependent on where they happen to end up, and policy and support can differ wildly between colleges. It also makes pursuing University-scale reform and policy change incredibly difficult, particularly as colleges are often highly protective of their own autonomy.

Colleges have a crucial role to play in ensuring their own harassment policies, welfare support and training are up to scratch, but what we really need is systemic institutional reform of the way Oxford is governed if we're going to do justice to survivors.

One suggestion is that recording should be centralised. How do you think that would help?

Nicola: A centralised reporting system would help in four main ways:

1. It will help address the deceptively low statistics we discussed previously, by revealing and unifying case numbers across the 45 colleges and private halls.
2. Colleges are ultimately small institutions. Staff shortages present a barrier when it comes to establishing a welfare system comprehensive and professional enough to effectively handle cases of misconduct, especially sexual misconduct, which must be handled sensitively. A centralised system opens up the possibility of a specialised team, one that is properly equipped, trained and able to provide a fast, informed and effective response.
3. By bringing the reporting system outside of the col-

lege community, one avoids certain biases and conflicts of interest, such as staff members with authority being reluctant to pursue action against a colleague or student whom they know personally.

4. It is more inclusive. Colleges are best placed when both 1) the reporting party (the victim) and reported party (the perpetrator) are students or staff at the same college and 2) the incident occurred on college grounds. However, cases of sexual assault vary hugely. As soon as people come forward about an incident that happened outside of Oxford and/or that involved someone from a different college, that college quickly runs into obstacles, such as how to enforce disciplinary action against someone at a different college.

Are we able to break down the problem: is sexual harassment more likely in staff-student, student-student, non-student-student situations?

Timea: It's very difficult for us to gather information on this, given the extent of underreporting, silencing of survivors and difficulty of gathering data across almost forty colleges with their own legal independence and records. However, it's important to recognise the different ways that positions of power within institutional structures can play into issues of consent and assault.

Staff-student relationships, which very few Oxford colleges currently have a clear policy against, is something *It Happens Here* has been lobbying on in the past, and it's crucial to recognise how the power a member of staff may have over a student's life, finances or grades can make them more vulnerable to exploitation or make reporting more difficult. 'Breaking the problem down' doesn't mean designating one kind of relationship or instance of sexual violence as more significant, but it does mean recognising the complexity of the issue, the different ways students and staff (who themselves can absolutely be survivors of assault) are vulnerable, and the different strategies we can try to use to fight the problem.

Do trans folk face a particular problem? If so, how can this be tackled?

Nicola: Put simply – yes.

Reliable statistics around sexual misconduct are difficult to come by as it is, but even these will often break down victims and perpetrators into "male" and "female", with little to no recognition of intersex or non-binary categories, or the impact of being cisgender or transgender on these statistics. As such, the true extent of how sexual violence impacts trans people is not truly known. This should certainly be rectified, by ensuring that the University and its colleges make sure this information is recorded.

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (27,715 respondents) did find that trans people are at a substantially high risk of being sexually assaulted, with nearly half (47%) of respondents reporting being sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime and one in ten in the past year.

However, there is a variation in this statistic with respect to different identities (e.g. 55% lifetime risk for non-binary people versus 44% for trans men and women) which demonstrates that these experiences are not uniform and

cannot be generalised across the entire trans community. It is also very hard to compare these statistics with those for the general population as different studies measure the prevalence of sexual assault in different ways.

There are particular reasons why it would be harder for trans people to bring complaints forward to the police. For instance, trans people may find forensic medical examinations* especially distressing, which presents a barrier to pursuing a legal case. They may be concerned about discrimination from medical practitioners on gendered grounds, and for some trans people, situations where practitioners see and touch parts of their bodies could be made even more distressing by dysphoria.

In regards to reporting, the LGBTQ+ community more broadly is no stranger to stigma and marginalisation. It is difficult enough to report, without having to navigate the risk of discrimination and stereotype-informed misinterpretations of your experience by support workers, authorities and bystanders.

Some trans people are also at risk of being socially isolated. In terms of support: when family, friends and acquaintances are unsupportive of your gender identity, you may be dissuaded from disclosing your experience of sexual assault. In terms of relationship abuse: having a smaller pool of accepting partners may make trans people feel less confident in leaving abusive relationships.

Altogether, a lot of the above issues could be addressed by ensuring that there is a strong support network for trans staff and students, especially so that:

- awareness becomes the norm, not the exception, preventing the propagation of stereotypes that make disclosures and reports unnecessarily difficult and complicated
- trans people have someone to turn to who can give informed support throughout the reporting process, especially if they decide to pursue an FME.

Finally, it is vital to remember that:

1. there is no universal concept or trend when it comes to the experience of sexual violence, and this remains true for trans people.

2. transness intersects with all aspects of a person's identity. In the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, although 47% of respondents reported being sexually assaulted at some point, the figure was even higher among those with disabilities (61%), certain ethnic groups (American Indian (65%)), multiracial (59%), Middle Eastern (58%), and Black (53%), and transgender men (51%).

Part of the work of the project is consent workshops. Many – if not all – colleges have been running these for a number of years. Do you think they have been successful? What could be improved?

Timea: Consent workshops are a vital part of tackling rape culture on campus and informing people about where to access justice and support. Unfortunately, some of the problems we've seen with these workshops are low or disengaged attendance and colleges not enforcing attendance, particularly among the graduate student body,

despite the excellent work done by students and staff who facilitate these.

The workshops are also substantially more nuanced than people realise – there's a feeling that you're going to go into a room, be lectured along the lines of "don't try to have sex with somebody if they're passed out" and never have to think about it again. But consent is a deeply textured and complex issue that affects us in all aspects of our lives and not something any of us have the option to ignore, survivor or not.

One important part of the problem is getting college heads and students to recognise that learning about consent is not optional, and we've seen positive changes in monitoring attendance in recent years. We also need to recognise consent is not something you get a forty-minute workshop on and then understand perfectly for the rest of your student and adult life. We need to have ongoing conversations about how we respect the boundaries and dignity of others, something that this campaign encourages people to do.

Nicola: It is also worth reminding people that all students at the University of Oxford have free access to *Consent Matters*, a hugely valuable, 1-hour online course divided into three 20-minute modules: "Thinking about consent", "Communication skills and relationships" and "Looking out for others".

The benefit of *Consent Matters* is that it is online and can be done in private, which removes some of the self-consciousness around learning and discussing consent. When I did the *Consent Matters* course, I was impressed by its comprehensiveness, inclusivity and engaging design, particularly given that it is relatively short. Some colleges, such as LMH, already require students to complete this course before matriculation, while continuing to run Consent Workshops for Freshers.

The benefit of Consent Workshops, in contrast, is to get people comfortable with talking about and hearing others talk about consent. It also helps apply concepts by putting conversations around consent specifically in the context of this university (such as giving example scenarios involving crew dates).

Consent Matters and the Consent Workshops complement each other to provide a safe space for students to explore the topic of consent.

What role should the police play? If there's underreporting, particularly of potentially criminal acts, is part of the problem that victims/survivors don't feel they can talk to the police?

Nicola: I think we need to switch this question around a bit: who and what stops people who have experienced sexual assault from talking to the police? It places the emphasis less on the 'mental fortitude' of traumatised survivors and more on the systems in place that prevent survivors of a certain trauma from seeking help versus survivors of other traumas.

In this area, there is much to unpack, ranging from how cases have been handled historically to the specific obstacles faced by marginalised groups (such as transgender people, as discussed earlier). My view is that a lot of the problem ultimately comes from a lack of clarity and a lack of support. A person who has experienced sexual,

emotional and possibly physical trauma is expected to find exactly who to go to, when to go to them and what exactly to do or say. In reality, people don't always know who to call, where to go or even how to describe their experiences. "Something bad happened," their body says, but what? And was it "bad enough" to "deserve" police intervention?

When college policies are confusing or nonexistent, when the people you are meant to approach are faceless strangers, when the perpetrator lives in your accommodation building, when you don't know what a SARC is, when it took you weeks to find out that Oxford has an ISVA, when you sit down in front of the police officer and think "I'm doing this all wrong!" – the person who has experienced trauma is not in the mental space to navigate all these challenges, at least not easily.

The police absolutely must play a role in securing the safety of victims and investigating and disciplining offenders. The problems that they must overcome in order to achieve this are coming from all directions. Their greatest ally in this respect is the ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor), who can provide invaluable practical, legal and emotional support for anyone reporting current or historical sexual violence. There is an ISVA exclusively dedicated to the support of Oxford University students. Employed by the highly-reputable Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC), they operate independently from the University and any communication with the ISVA is strictly confidential.

You can find more information about the Oxford University ISVA at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/isva>.

Laura Kipnis, the US writer and feminist, wrote in her book about the dangers of creating a culture of "sexual paranoia" on campus, in particular through the role of Title IX Officers on campus (Alma Prelec wrote about Kipnis's book for Oxford Magazine, 2nd Week, TT19). How would you address that concern?

Timea: Sexual violence is endemic at Oxford and indeed on campus almost everywhere. You are more likely to be assaulted as a student than in any other occupation. Every single student you speak to openly will have a story, either their own or someone else's. In our experience, the people

who don't recognise that there is a problem – who are unfortunately often those who hold the institutional power to change it – don't recognise either the scale of under reporting and cultures of silence that operate at Oxford, or otherwise don't recognise what assault and harassment can look like. We'd emphasise that we as a campaign aren't interested in fearmongering, and want to supplement our work with as accurate a picture of the problem as we can get. But what we find on the ground, talking with survivors and students constantly, is often very different from what those at the top are able – or willing – to see.

Is there a problem with drinking culture in Oxford?

Nicola: It's not Oxford, it's the UK. British drinking culture is infamous for its emphasis on binge drinking and "drinking-to-get-drunk." More information on this can be found on the *Alcohol Change* website.

However, this penchant for binge drinking and drunkenness can be amplified in a university setting, with popular social events – like crew dates, initiations and bops – traditionally leaning heavily on alcohol consumption for enjoyment. This isn't to say that this drinking culture is fixed and integral to our culture as a whole. About 1 in 5 people in the UK don't drink at all – and this figure is growing among young people. It is therefore unsurprising that there has been more discussion around how to make popular social events less reliant on alcohol.

This is especially important in creating a safe environment for everyone, as navigating consent is much more difficult when people are drunk. The victim may be unable to give or revoke consent, the perpetrator may be especially violent, and bystanders may be less able to notice and effectively intervene. When events do involve alcohol, it is important to have security and welfare support on standby in case something happens – much like a designated driver, who takes the wheel before someone does something stupid.

More information on and support for alcohol addiction can be found on *Alcohol Change* and *Drinkaware*.

*Forensic medical examination (FME): a head-to-toe physical examination looking for injuries and other signs of sexual assault. More information can be found at <https://www.thehavens.org.uk/visiting-us/what-happens-at-the-havens/forensic-examination/>

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

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The Researcher Hub

RACHEL BRAY AND KELSEY INOUE

The problems facing Fixed Term Contract workers (as well as other casual employees of the University and colleges) are well known. The University has responded by creating the Researcher Hub. The Researcher Hub consists of a team of 3 full-time and 4 part-time staff (including secondments), and works to support all researchers on fixed-term research or teaching contracts across Oxford.

The editors sought for details from Rachel Bray, the Director and colleague Kelsey Inouye

Readers may have seen the recent news about the opening of the Researcher Hub. Can you tell us more about this initiative?

The Researcher Hub was established in 2021, primarily to provide career and professional development support to all those on fixed-term research or teaching contracts across the collegiate University and to address Priority 8 in the University's Strategic Plan to “*enhance the opportunities and support for early-career researchers*”. Initial funding for a 3-year period was secured from the UAS budget, with contributions from Research Services and the John Fell Fund. Administratively, the Hub sits within People and Organisational Development (POD). Our activity is governed by the Research Staff Steering Committee and guided by the Academic Advocate for Research Staff, Professor David Gavaghan, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor Patrick Grant.

What is the rationale for setting up the Hub?

The Hub was set up to cohere and amplify support to this very large and diverse staff group (over 5,000 across the collegiate University (approximately 60% of whom are international) who make a major contribution to Oxford's research rankings and are at a pivotal stage in their own careers. The everyday realities entail balancing cutting-edge research with preparation for onward steps in other institutions or employment sectors (owing to the relative scarcity of fellowships or permanent academic positions here and across the sector). Knowing how to do this most effectively during one's contract period is crucial to individual well-being, confident investment in professional development and a healthy research culture across Oxford. One of the Hub's primary roles is to signpost and enhance the quality of personal, professional and career development support to this group of colleagues from the moment they accept an offer from Oxford to their next career step.

In meeting these needs the Hub is a key mechanism for helping researchers, academic PIs or line managers and professional support colleagues to fulfil our individual and institutional obligations to *The Concordat to Sup-*

port the Career Development of Researchers. These are to:

- Create an inclusive, fair, collegial and positive work environment;
- Recognise and reward the contributions of all researchers; and
- Realise the potential of all researchers through relevant professional and career development.

Can you tell us what sort of activities it will organise?

The Hub runs regular Welcome events for new researchers online and in-person, away-days for researcher representatives from across the University and a range of other networking and training events. We also support the Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS) with administrative support in organising a range of social and personal development activities for researchers to make connections, get to know Oxford and invest in their well-being.

Over the past ten months we have designed and led a participatory process to co-create an action plan for delivering the above Concordat involving peer groups of researchers, academics and professional service colleagues from across the University (meeting in online workshops over 3 months). After extensive internal and external review, this action plan is now at final stages of approval and will be published in April 2023. The Hub has been tasked with coordinating the implementation of the 13 actions in the plan, in collaboration with the Research Strategy and Policy Unity (in Research Services) and the governance structure for supporting fixed term researchers. These include consistent inductions, an improved welcome, access to a Career Development Review at least annually, ability to benefit from the availability of at least ten days of professional development *pro rata* per year, and support for career destinations across a wide variety of sectors and roles.

The Hub is working with researchers and those in academic and other support roles (in departments, divisions and colleges) to raise awareness of the rich array of opportunities within the University and city. For example, we have designed an ‘Oxford Researcher's Trailmap’ signalling the support available to researchers in developing their research, their careers, and their personal wellbeing, from day one to their next career step, that links to relevant resources at each stage. [This map is now with the design team and will be published on the *Support for Researchers* page]

We actively enable researchers to participate in decision-making across the University by strengthening the new representation structure, and by welcoming, guiding and supporting researchers who volunteer to be representatives for their department/faculty, division or on a senior University committee. We provide information, support, training in how to be an effective representative

or committee member, and fellowships for those representatives with a larger set of responsibilities: e.g. on central committees.

Our next step is to share good practice amongst the representatives to spark ideas and collaborations in departments keen to start or extend their activity in these areas.

The Hub collaborates across the central services to develop policy and facilitate activity aligned to the Concordat commitments. Examples include enabling access to Career Development Reviews and putting in place effective routes for researchers to raise concerns relating to fair treatment and research practice outside their management structure and in confidence, in ways that offer appropriate support and ensure transparency in follow-up activity.

Our provision responds to priorities identified within divisional researcher development teams and researcher forums. The Hub will fill gaps in training and development for researchers, and find ways to expand opportunities offered in one part of the University more broadly. Drawing on learning from the Humanities Division's successful writing partnerships programme, we will design and pilot writing support for researchers across the University that engages researchers in a 'train the trainer' approach. We will offer training in project management for researchers, and promote the re-launch of the *Researcher Strategy Consultancy* for hands-on skill development in leadership, teamwork and communication. We also will run four sessions on exploring options beyond academia within the very popular *Careers Conference for Researchers* this March.

There are many implications of being on a fixed-term contract; what is the Hub doing to address the contract-related issues that are of greatest concern to fixed-term researchers?

The Hub is working with the divisions to address this concern through three ways; firstly to gain a better understanding of the profiles of fixed-term researchers across the University (nature and duration of contracts, and total period employed), secondly to communicate the differences and similarities between an open-ended and a fixed-term contract for staff in a research environment that relies on external funding; and thirdly to identify viable changes in contractual arrangements that could provide greater career stability for certain groups of research staff (e.g. those who have been employed over a long period, or those with highly transferable technical skills). We hope to be able to communicate the outcomes of this work to fixed-term researchers over the course of the next year.

What do you see as the role of the colleges in your work?

The Hub's services are available to the over 500 JRFs and other fixed-term researchers employed by colleges and we hope to facilitate networking opportunities amongst this group and with the wider group of researchers across Oxford who typically have no college affiliation. The college representatives within the governance structure help us plan and achieve such opportunities. One current successful example is encouraging colleges to make *light associations available* on terms that suit, so that researchers can

access the communities and professional networks found in colleges.

Can you tell readers about your targets (or "measurables")?

Our targets include an approved and published Concordat action plan demonstrating University-wide consensus on priorities for supporting researchers; related policy for researcher access to an annual Career Development Review, and engaging communications on the provision and responsibilities within the action plan for researchers, their line managers and support staff, respectively.

We will offer warm and practical welcomes to all researchers, signposting key resources and providing opportunities to meet others from wider departments and colleges, in University Parks, Wytham Woods or similarly beautiful settings. Working with divisions, we will identify and fill key gaps in professional development, for example leadership competence, writing skills and project management. Our final set of targets will grow researcher activity in career exploration and development by increasing careers guidance tailored to experienced researchers and their access to information about how former fixed-term researchers have moved into highly rewarding roles across a wide range of sectors.

What sort of collaborations will the Hub be involved in?

Looking forward, one of the Hub's responsibilities in the Concordat action plan is to facilitate ways to further equip PIs and other academic line managers or mentors in people-related leadership skills, such as active-listening, and how to conduct an effective Career Development Review. We plan to collaborate with Heads of Departments and senior academics in designing and piloting these to ensure fit with local contexts and needs.

We also have a range of researcher-focused activities planned. For instance, we will work with divisions on providing welcoming inductions to new research staff and ensure welcome packs are sent out prior to arrival at Oxford. We also aim to grow relationships with policy and practice organizations beyond academia that want to recruit researchers, and work in partnership with other leading UK universities to develop joint (externally funded) programmes (e.g. in leadership development) and to influence national policy relating to the professional and career development of research staff.

What advice would you have for a researcher on a fixed-term contract who doesn't know whether to continue pursuing an academic career or not?

There are many excellent career options beyond academia to explore. When thinking about next steps in your career trajectory, reflect upon your *assumptions about academia* and your skillset, as well as what you like and dislike about your work. Think about your future goals, both professional and personal, and the extent to which an academic career aligns with those goals. Be sure to seek information about careers beyond academia through Careers Services and the Research Careers website, and talk to your line manager about your aspirations, concerns and options.

A New Test Act?

EDI and Ideological Overreach

ROGER TEICHMANN

Abstract nouns, like people, have a habit of clumping together. When it comes to people, somebody who on their own comes across as innocuous or even likeable can cease to be so when they're part of a crowd; and so it is with abstractions. Who could object to liberty, or have qualms about fraternity? Put them together with equality, however, and you get a whole which is not simply the sum of its parts: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* stands for something with a definite historical and ideological significance. When it came on the scene it was a call to arms. Aristocrats in tumbrils might have felt unpleasant associations.

A trio of abstractions currently in vogue is *Equality, Diversity, Inclusion*, or EDI. (A variant, with *Equity* instead of *Equality*, can also be found. Evolution may decide which if either becomes dominant.) Again, what more friendly notions could you find, taken individually? It's true that the friendliness is partly a function of the vagueness, just as some people appear innocuous because you can't really tell what they're committed to. But commitments do start to appear when these three nouns clump together. For of course their being clumped together is not an accident – people have clumped them together for a reason.

It is important to state these things in case it's alleged that EDI is merely a shorthand for 'best practice', 'decent behaviour', or whatever. It is not; indeed, if it were, why would it be necessary? We already know that you shouldn't treat candidates for jobs worse simply because they belong to some ethnic group, for example, and the law of the land generally protects people from such unjust treatment. And where the law itself doesn't get involved (immediately) we rely on social pressure or institutional reprimand, as with a tutor who keeps returning students' essays months late. Perhaps it will be said that EDI is a form of best practice, but that our notions of best practice need to be expanded. But that is exactly what I mean by a 'commitment': we are evidently in the realm of moral and political debate. And debate is inconsistent with the enforcement of particular views, however meritorious.

Why do I talk of 'enforcement'?

Many readers will have received a draft document emanating from the Senior Tutors' Committee, entitled 'Associate Professor Inclusive Recruitment Guidelines'. Section 1 of this document ('Include EDI selection criteria') would allow or require candidates to be asked if they support EDI and would count it in a candidate's favour if they had been active on its behalf. A flavour of how the selection criteria would be applied comes under 'Assessing Responses: Positive Indicators', where an example of a good response from a candidate is given: '[the candidate] provides clear examples where they have challenged or reported inappropriate attitudes, language and behaviour which is viewed as abusive, aggressive or discriminatory'.

The reporting of 'inappropriate attitudes' is, and has always been, one of the prime tools for enforcing orthodoxy. For what here counts as 'inappropriate' is not considered a possible matter for debate; it is in fact determined by the standards of EDI, explicitly so insofar as the context ('Positive Indicators') is a candidate's level of support for EDI values. The motive for favouring candidates for having wielded this tool seems clear: not only will the candidate (if successful) be orthodox in their new position, but they will be eager to spread the orthodoxy.¹

The Senior Tutors' Committee is not the only body within Oxford to be proposing adherence to EDI as a selection criterion for academic posts. The Race Equality Task Force has proposed the same, along with much else. In both cases, the proposals appeared in the context of documents sent out for consultation. So at present the University is merely considering whether to go down this route.

Where does our own Vice-Chancellor stand on these issues? Fortunately we know. At the V-C's Open Forum of 28 January she responded to the following pre-submitted question:

'The V-C has in the past spoken in forthright defence of free speech and thought in connection with potential threats to these within the university. That there have been and are problems with the upholding of free speech and thought in other UK universities is widely acknowledged, examples including the harassment of Kathleen Stock at Sussex University for her beliefs about trans women and the requirement on St Andrew's students to sign up to a set of statements about race as a condition for matriculating.'

One potential threat to these freedoms would be the adoption of selection criteria for academic jobs which favoured candidates who espouse a given ideology. That is true regardless of the merits of the ideology. An ideology currently promoted in this and other universities is that of EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity). This is an ideology in the sense that a person may reasonably question and/or disagree with its tenets or presuppositions; such a person would be penalised by selection criteria of the sort I'm referring to. The whole issue is liable to become even more problematic if the Freedom of Speech (Higher Education) Bill becomes law, by the way.'

Would the V-C agree that it would be wrong for Oxford University to allow the adoption of selection criteria for academic jobs which favoured candidates who espouse a given ideology?'

Because of the length of the question the V-C only read out the final sentence; but she was responding to the question as submitted, and her response was to say that she agreed 'unequivocally'. This is very good news. She did add that she was unaware of any plans to adopt such selection criteria. It is possible she had not had sight of the

proposals of the Senior Tutors' Committee and the Race Equality Task Force. For all that, her statement of principle is to be welcomed.

At present, the proposals are 'under consideration'. In Durham, they (or similar ones) were made policy. The Free Speech Union promptly wrote to the V-C reminding her of the university's legal obligations.² Durham is not the same in all respects as Oxford, but we would do well to consider carefully what will happen if we clump together with all those other institutions who embrace EDI in the way Durham has. And 'clumping together' does seem the appropriate term; one academic who submitted objections to the Senior Tutors' Committee received the response:

'The inclusion of equality and diversity criteria in further particulars has become commonplace amongst most HEIs in the UK, Europe and US. Oxford is slightly behind the curve in this respect and one of the reasons colleges, departments and faculties requested it be included in these guidelines.'

To clinch the matter the author added:

'12 Associate Professors who were appointed in 2020 and interviewed as part of the project, highlighted that for all their other job applications, they had been expected to provide similar information for student facing roles.'

In these (post-)pandemic days we are used to being given numbers rather than percentages but it would have been nice to know the total number of interviewed Associate Professors. The same goes for the unquantified 'colleges, departments and faculties'. But since when was *being behind the curve* an acceptable reason for university policy-making?

Universities are meant to contain independent-minded individuals, capable of reasoning and debate, rather than intellectual fashion victims. Indeed, to discourage independent thought is surely contrary to best practice in a big way. It seems to me that those who propose the discouragement of free and independent thinking by requiring adherence to any ideology, whether from job candidates, academics, students or staff, are acting to undermine the key values for which a university stands. It is good to know we have a Vice-Chancellor who agrees.

¹A policy of encouraging the reporting (possibly anonymous) of others' verbal misbehaviour was recently mooted at Cambridge University; commentators dubbed it a 'snitches' charter' and the negative publicity seems to have contributed to the V-C's decision to resign. So it is a policy that can backfire.

²See <https://freespeechunion.org/letter-to-professor-karen-obrien-vice-chancellor-of-durham-university-concerning-a-diversity-pledge-that-applicants-for-assistant-professorships-are-required-to-make/>

Remember that a wealth of information about the University has now been made available by the EJRA Review Group;
<https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/working-at-oxford/ejra#tab-3236066>

Christ Church Reform

BRIAN MARTIN

I look on the Christ Church Deanery debacle as an outsider. I have no connection with the college and little with the cathedral, although I am a member of the University of Oxford and consider myself an Anglican. I have written before about the necessity of there being in future a division between academia and the Church.

Now that a settlement has been made between the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and the college, there is an extreme necessity that the constitution of Christ Church should be changed. The college should now heed its own affairs, likewise the Church. Therefore, the Dean should work as a cathedral dean and the college should have its own head of House. The present position for the governance of Christ Church is clearly unsustainable and now that a settlement has been achieved between the present Dean and the college, the separation ought to be made. Such a separation needs the cooperation of the Church, the college, and might even require an act of parliament or order of the Privy Council. Whatever the outcome, the Dean should look after cathedral affairs and the head of college care for the college.

The point is that the Principal, Warden, Provost, Master, or whatever you wish to call the person elected head of house, is *primus inter pares* and is elected as Chair of the fellowship, the governing body. An Oxford college is what it says, a collegiate body. All voices are equal. It is true that a number of colleges have, over the last forty years or so, had ulterior motives for electing heads, reasons to do mostly with finance, fund-raising and publicity. These heads are supposed to have possessed contacts with the world outside Oxford, to philanthropic organisations, wealthy donors, or influential people in public life, politics, and government, who know about such sources of funding. The old way of electing a head of house distinguished by scholarly achievement has been neglected.

Heads have been ex-diplomats, media people (Rusbridger at Lady Margaret Hall and Damazar of St Peter's), ex-civil servants who have been close to Prime Ministers, celebrity judges, even celebrity sportsmen. Some have succeeded, some have failed, and those who have failed have all misunderstood their role. And so it is with the present Dean of Christ Church, Martyn Percy. The college is the foundation, and the head is answerable to the fellowship electorate. Once confidence is lost, the head's authority is lost. This is the reason why some colleges have voted their principals out of office over the years. It was Dean Percy's fate that his position became untenable.

The mistake so often is that new heads, once elected, interpret their role as that of a CEO. In a collegiate system that is not possible. Policy changes, initiatives, all must be agreed by the governing body. Any Head who tries to dominate the fellowship is doomed. A college cannot be run like a business; an autocrat will not be tolerated. It may be that administrative dictatorship works for a while because most fellows wish to concentrate on academic work in library or lab, or in lectures and tutorials, but

eventually there is always revolution. Indifference and carelessness give way to objection and opposition.

It is unfortunate that mistakes and missteps have been made along the way by both sides in the fractious Christ Church argument. Too many people have been damaged, not least the Dean himself and too much money spent in legal fees. The dispute could have been settled a year or two ago with less intransigence by both parties. Once confidence had ebbed, the Dean should have settled, refrained from comments such as likening his occupation of the Dean's residence to the necessity of the college porters wearing bowler hats, nor should he have relied on the support of people like Jonathan Aitken and ex-Archbishop Carey who lessened the effect of his cause. Similarly, the fellows, known as Students, in majority over the issues should have been less extreme in condemnation and e-mail criticism, refraining from comparisons with Colin Dexter novels, and more circumspect in diplomatically solving the problem. After Ripon College and the Deanery of Christ Church, no doubt earlier on, Martyn Percy could have settled, with the Church's blessing, for reasonable compensation and, maybe, a bishopric. Brasenose College managed to accommodate the departure of Roger Cashmore in a dignified manner; and that was in a college where a previous Principal, Lord Windlesham, said that chairing a governing body meeting was like "trying to herd cats".

At Christ Church the situation deteriorated. The Chancellor, Chris Patten, stepped into the fracas, and the Vice-Chancellor, Louise Richardson, both offering to attend a governing body meeting to air their views on possible harm the dispute is doing to the University's reputation. Alan Rusbridger then published his opinion (*THE*, 'Christ Church's internecine war is a huge failure of governance', 20th January, 2022). None of these interventions helped. The Oxford colleges, when the chips are down, are fiercely independent and do not relish interference from other quarters. They do not see themselves as institutions run by figureheads with unlimited power, but they respect their traditions of collegiate responsibility. They are not micro-states run by the equivalent of a Prime Minister, a business run by a CEO, or a newspaper controlled by its editor; they are co-operatives of collegiate academics. It is reported that undergraduates generally don't know who Patten is, others think him twenty or so years out of date, and Louise Richardson, speeding off to the Carnegie Corporation in the USA, never had the right feel for collegiate life.

What is to be done? Outside intervention by the central University administration should cease; it makes matters worse. College academics in Oxford see increasingly a bureaucratic takeover by the University's central administration that expands its number of staff exponentially, all, it is felt, to the cost of real academic study and research. The largely independent college systems of Cambridge and Oxford have made the two universities unique and

are one of the major reasons for their leading status in world university ranking.

Yet the most important move to make now is the separation of church from college and the measure should be taken swiftly. The Dean must be in post like any other Dean of a cathedral. Christ Church's head of house should be rewarded like any other college head. The two thoroughly

different jobs must be judged each on its merits. For the moment, compromises have been made and should be applauded. The college is on a new footing with the Charity Commission and it should prove unnecessary for the Commission to proceed further. All will then be well.

The others

Arriving last (having furthest
to travel) I asked the others
what brink or brim this was
– the world under water,
the flood itself flooded
with sun like a rift-valley lake
from which flamingoes
might lift as if from an ark

the whole affair pressed
with a luminous inverted cloud-map
like the other side of a coin
that fell once from pocket
to market-place floor, an unobserved
loss revealed centuries later
not face-down in the mud
but gazing skywards –

the greatest wonder of all being
how they had called me there,
the others, how I'd moved so much
further away than I thought,
how I might not have surfaced at all.

Alone that day, I drove, thought

nobody owns that running life up there
paused now and flowering
like a 3D print of blood and bone.
Driving on, I felt the arrow-thought:
perhaps that deer was you, survived
the rifle or the latest vehicle-deer
collision, returned to fix my phone
or be a virtual deer to battle loneliness.

Later in the twenty streets of town
I saw it there again, more like
a wolf now standing at the intersection –
the new free zone, no lights or lines
to stop a speeding car, like butter
to a bullet. I wished I knew
what it had learned there in the woods.
I wished I knew if it was me or you.

The claim

So many came to that portion
of the claim, the water not too deep there,
and left with tiny grains of gold,

dust really, and the freezing work
painstaking to the bone,
all that remained of Eldorado

like the land of how-to videos
we'd flocked to, so much
we'd hoped that could be fixed

the shattered screen,
the damaged heat-pump like a heart
destroyed by years of insults

even, one mountebank declared,
the mind, split into a dozen pieces
like a priceless vase exploded

on a marble floor, slipped
from the aristocrat's hands
(the crane in flight, the little bridge,

the homeward labourers as snow
begins to fall): in the ancient art
of the broken all could be repaired

with shining seams of precious metal,
the bird, the village and the snow,
and even made more lovely

by the gleaming scars – all you needed
was sufficient gold, all you needed
was to not be finished by the cold.

JANE DRAYCOTT

Jane Draycott's five collections of poems from Carcanet Press include *The Occupant*, *Over* (shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize for Poetry), *Prince Rupert's Drop* (shortlisted for the Forward Prize), and a translation of the fourteenth-century dream elegy *Pearl*. She is Senior Associate Tutor on Oxford's MSt in Creative Writing and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her new collection *The Kingdom* is forthcoming in autumn 2022.

Problems with portfolios

G.R.EVANS

In 'The Oxbridge Crown' (*Oxford Magazine*, No.441, 5th Week HT 2022), I left hanging the question of the way in which a Vice-Chancellor is to work with his or her Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios. The allocations of powers that these posts represent are still a relatively new phenomenon, less than two decades old. In contrast to the still-vague definitions of the powers of the Oxford and Cambridge Vice-Chancellors the portfolios have developed a degree of particularity.

Both Oxford and Cambridge have been getting into difficulties about what the stated contents of the portfolios amount to. How important and relevant is it that the responsibilities of Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios are defined and limited when the constitution allows a Vice-Chancellor no such 'charge' in general? And, most crucially, when Pro-Vice-Chancellors have increasing scope to exercise power on their own authority, to whom are they accountable?

The stated contents of portfolios may be extensive. Oxford's David Prout, an external salaried appointment from September 2017, summarizes his role on Linked-in:

*'As Pro-Vice-Chancellor for planning and resources I chair the University's Planning and Resource Allocation Committee and have responsibility for resource allocation, strategy, estates and the University's capital programme.'*¹

In October 2021 Cambridge spelt out comparably broadly its understanding of the role of one of its own portfolio-holders in a call for nominations for and 'expressions of interest' in the Pro-Vice-Chancellorship (Education). The responsibilities, it said, 'currently include':

*'widening access to, and increasing participation in, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes; increasing international student recruitment; and implementing a comprehensive student mental health and wellbeing strategy, which fully coordinates College and University provision. (It also involved outward-facing tasks, including) 'overseeing the University's response to initiatives and consultations led by the Office for Students'.'*²

Is this too much work for too few? Both universities have chosen to limit the numbers of Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios so it would not be a straightforward matter to divide the work among a larger number. Oxford's Regulations allow 'no more than the equivalent of five full-time Pro-Vice-Chancellors', though there are currently six.³ At present Cambridge allows a maximum of five with portfolios.⁴ Both universities maintain the older practice of also appointing Pro- or Deputy-Vice-Chancellors who have no portfolios but may act as deputies for the Vice-Chancellor, for example in chairing meetings (up to ten in this category in Oxford). In Cambridge the counterpart appointees without portfolios are in a longstanding category of any number of 'Deputy' Vice-Chancellors, appointed by the Vice-Chancellor under Statute C,III,7, to whom the Vice-Chancellor may delegate any of his or

her responsibilities. In neither university may the contents of portfolios be delegated to appointees in these secondary categories. The offices with portfolios have been designed to be quite distinct.

Neither university has chosen to fix the portfolios' contents formally and both continue to make changes, presumably at the Vice-Chancellor's instigation, in an effort to fit in all the areas which are, from time to time, found to need a place. At present Oxford has Pro-Vice-Chancellors for 'Education'; 'Planning and Resources'; 'Development and External Affairs'; 'Innovation'; 'Research' and (from this term) 'People and Digital'. Cambridge currently has Pro-Vice-Chancellors for 'Education'; 'Strategy and Planning'; 'University Community and Engagement'; 'Enterprise and Business Relations'; 'Research and International Partnerships'.

These creatively-labelled areas of wide-ranging responsibility suggest that both Universities have struggled within the limited number of Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios they have permitted themselves, so as to accommodate the range of needs which have gradually been identified. Oxford has found itself in particular difficulties over shoehorning into its permitted number of 'portfolios' a place for 'People'. For some years the 'People', though enjoying a Personnel Committee of Council, lacked their own Pro-Vice-Chancellor. During the reform of Statute XII, completed with Privy Council approval in February in 2017, Stephen Goss served as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Personnel and Equality) and chaired the Personnel Committee. After his retirement Human Resources soldiered on without a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of their own until Anne Trefethan (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services and University Collections)) from 2015 had People added to her portfolio, the re-labelled 'Gardens, Libraries and Museums' (GLAM).

In this term's Open Forum, the Vice-Chancellor mentioned that funding had been 'obtained' for a new 'fully established Pro-Vice-Chancellor post covering EDI'.⁵ It was not quite clear whether the 'People' brief was now to cover 'EDI'.⁶ The Equality and Diversity Unit Hilary Term Newsletter is behind SSO.⁷ However, with the *Bulletin* of 12 February 2022 came an 'Announcement from the Vice-Chancellor' with 'news of some redistribution of responsibilities among the senior team'.⁸ Anne Trefethan would be 'handing over responsibility for GLAM to Richard Ovenden, currently Bodley's Librarian'. She would retain People but add Digital to her portfolio, becoming Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital).

To his newly-created role as Head of GLAM Bodley's Librarian was appointed with effect from 14 February.⁹ The *Gazette* of 17 February confirmed the news, publishing extensive Council changes to the Regulations, to come into effect from 4 March. So Gardens, Libraries and Museums are to have a constitutionally-recognised 'Head', but no longer a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The new role specification is left relatively undefined.¹⁰

In Cambridge too there can occur a somewhat breathless *ad hoc* rearrangement of portfolio contents. A browse in the Council Minutes makes it clear that the work-load of Cambridge's 80% full-time Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios is enormous.

Item 60 of the Council meeting of 22 January 2018 concerned the recruitment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor in succession to Professor Maskell. 'The Pro-Vice-Chancellors and the Chief Financial Officer left the meeting for discussion of this matter'.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that this Pro-Vice-Chancellor would have responsibility for strategy and planning for the academic activities and mission of the University (effectively, 'Little U'). In practice, this would cover all of the matters within the portfolio of the current Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) including estates and capital planning for academic purposes. This Pro-Vice-Chancellor would engage actively with the finances of the University and have responsibility for strategy and planning across Schools and Non-School Institutions. In essence, the role would ensure that there was a strong academic voice at the centre of the University's financial planning. It was essential, therefore, that the individual had significant financial capability and literacy.

It was recognised that 'there was likely to be some blurring of boundaries' between 'the respective responsibilities of this Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Financial Officer', an academic and an administrative role, which would affect the choice of 'the most appropriate terminology for the title of the post'. The Notice about the appointment appeared in the *Reporter* of 7 February, renaming the Pro-Vice-Chancellorship as 'Strategy and Planning'. 'The Council expects to make this appointment at its meeting on 21 May 2018'.¹¹

Conclusions and implications

The two Universities treat appointment to the posts of their Pro-Vice-Chancellors in different ways. Oxford's may be external or internal (and vacancies are not necessarily advertised). Procedure for appointment is determined by Council Regulation but the appointment is made by the Vice-Chancellor, subject to Council approval. The Vice-Chancellor recommends the 'designated functions' for which they will have 'special responsibility'. These are agreed by Council, and the same recommendation plus Council agreement determines the period of appointment (with no apparent limit to subsequent reappointments).¹² If a post is advertised there is no constitutional requirement that this is done on permanent record in the *Gazette*, though the *Gazette* carries a notice that such an appointment has been made to a Pro-Vice-Chancellorship with a specific portfolio 'in the Vice-Chancellors Office'.¹³

In contrast Cambridge's Pro-Vice-Chancellors must be current academics in the University and when a current holder or a specific Pro-Vice-Chancellorial office resigns or comes to the end of the permitted period of service (three years, renewable only once) the *Reporter* publishes a call for nominations or expressions of interest. The appointment is then taken forward by a Nominations Committee whose membership is constituted by Ordinance,¹⁴ which recommends to the Council and the Council appoints the Pro-Vice-Chancellor. This suggests that the Oxford Pro-Vice-Chancellors are accountable to

the Vice-Chancellor while the Cambridge ones are constitutionally accountable to Council 'through' the Vice-Chancellor.

It is far from clear how accountable the portfolioed Pro-Vice-Chancellors are to the University Councils in either Oxford or Cambridge nor is the extent to which they exercise power within and through the Councils. In Oxford Pro-Vice-Chancellors are not *ex officio* members of Council. Oxford's Vice-Chancellor may nominate them for Council membership. They are not members of Cambridge's Council unless they happen to have been elected in one of the categories on which the Regent House votes,¹⁵ though Council Minutes indicate that they normally attend Council meetings. In the record their oral reports to Council are often included with that of the Vice-Chancellor. Oxford's Council Committees were a creation of the North Reforms and Pro-Vice-Chancellors' chairmanship is not consistent, but corresponding where it occurs (approximately) to their briefs.

Both universities have failed to ensure that their respective sovereign bodies have been properly – or at all – involved in the development and shifting of the portfolios. That has become increasingly important as the portfolios have expanded. Most urgent of all in both universities is a serious review of the nature of the powers being directly exercised by Pro-Vice-Chancellors and its relationship to a constitution in which those of a Vice-Chancellor remain vague and the sovereign body has had little say in these developments. One thing we do know: several of Oxford's Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios have recently had their terms of office extended so the new Vice-Chancellor will have limited options if he or she wants to make a fresh start.

¹ <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/david-prout-09bb3151>.

² <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2021-22/weekly/6632/6632.pdf>

³ Members of Congregation may be appointed as additional Pro-Vice-Chancellors without portfolios, up to a maximum of ten in that category, Council Regulations 21 of 2002, 10(1) and (11).

⁴ Ordinances (2021) p.710.

⁵ Editorial. *Oxford Magazine*, No.441, 5th Week HT 2022.

⁶ www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/university-officers. The current official list of University Officers (at the time of writing) includes only the previous six Pro-Vice-Chancellorships with portfolios along with the nine Pro-Vice-Chancellors without portfolios, in total fifteen. This would seem to be in breach of the Regulations which limit the total with portfolios to five and the overall total to ten.

⁷ <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/news>

⁸ <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/article/announcement-from-the-vice-chancellor-1>.

⁹ <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/media/richard-ovenden-head-of-glam>

¹⁰ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/university-officers>

¹¹ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2017-18/weekly/6494/section1.shtml#heading2-6>

¹² Council Regulations 21 of 2002 (10,1).

¹³ For example, *Gazette*, 19 July, 2018.

¹⁴ Ordinances p.710.

¹⁵ Heads of House; Readers and Professors; other members of the Regent House.

Notes from Ivory Flats

ROBERT FOLEY

Why we are all folding napkins now

Imagine there are two activities going on in your Department – buttering toast and folding napkins. Buttering toast is, in everyone's reckoning, more important than folding napkins. Buttered toast is tasty, essential for thinking and productivity, can be mixed with lots of other things according to need and taste (jam, honey, marmite), and the Department has attracted some very talented toast-butterers, and indeed has a strong international reputation for the toast-butter interface. And besides, you can always wipe your fingers and mouth on your sleeve.

However, for reasons lost in the bowels of some email, folding napkins has to be organised at a higher level, as all napkins have to be folded the same way, whereas buttering toast can be left to the butterer. So a Director of Napkin Folding is appointed in the central administration, soon to be followed by a couple of NF support staff, as it turns out to be quite complex to co-ordinate across the University, where previously triangles, rectangles, squares and those funny swan like things, have flourished. Soon directives and forms are flying around, as harmonisation of napkin folding continues apace. People have less and less time to butter the toast, as they are filling in napkin forms and learning the preferred, and then approved, way of folding. The Department's reputation for Toast Buttering Science, begins to fall and it gets squeezed into shorter and shorter periods of time. Inevitably, this is put down to the greater success and importance of napkin folding, so a few more NF staff are appointed. Even though fewer napkins are needed as no one is making toast any more, they continue to multiply.

And, as you may be wondering where this is going, this is the payoff. Any central assessment of activity in the Department can now see that Napkin Folding is more important than toast buttering, and indeed toast-buttering is entirely dependent upon napkin folding. Everybody is now feverishly creating piles of folded napkins. This in turn can be ascribed to the effectiveness of the central administration's Napkin Folding Division (promotions all round!), and so also to the success of centralising. In contrast, it could be said that toast-buttering failed because it lacked central leadership, co-ordination and proper management. Eventually, the end comes when only a few dried crumbs are left on a table heaving with napkins.

Alright, an exaggeration perhaps, but this is a process we have all seen happening, although you might want to replace buttering toast and napkin folding with something more appropriate like research or teaching on the one hand, and management on the other, perhaps. Ask virtually any academic about how they spend their time, and there will be time spent teaching, time spent doing research, but more and more there is time spent on activities that can best be described as supportive, ancillary or peripheral to research and teaching (which of those three words – supportive, ancillary or peripheral – you

prefer is likely to vary depending on where you lie in the university ecosystem). Strategic committees on research, teaching planning, student feedback, curriculum reviews, REF planning, REF post-mortems, pre-grant application assessments by various levels within the university, risk assessments, and many, many reports are where the time increasingly goes. Napkin folding is not entirely irrelevant to buttering toast, but it is not the objective itself, and the same is true of the core activities – research and teaching – and the ancillary activities. Ultimately one could eat buttered toast without a napkin, although it is better to have one, but how carefully and uniformly folded it is may not matter that much.

And here we come to the heart of what I want to say. I am not someone who believes there is a conspiracy to make lives harder for the lumpen-academic, or indeed much other than good intentions among the PTB¹, but I am interested in the processes by which 'things just happen that way'. In this case, it relates to the consequences of what I would call 'centralisability', an ugly but essential word. Some tasks either have to be more centralised, or more importantly, *can* be centralised, others cannot, or cannot without changing them irrevocably. Centralisability is a measure of how easy it is to centralise something. It is scale free – collaborators on a paper require some centralisation, university finance departments a lot. However, the centralisability of a task should not be an indication of, or proxy for, its importance to the institution, and in many cases it is exactly the reverse. Indeed, it may even be the case that there is a law, like Murphy's Law, that the easier it is to centralise something, the less important it is to the actual life of the institution. This would make some sort of sense, as to a large extent the more centralisable something is, the less specific, and so the less it connects to local mentalities and contexts, and the greater the potential for distancing – for a sense of peripheralization. It is this that I mean by the 'processes by which things happen', and, of course, have happened.

Once activities have come, for better or for worse, under more central management, they will inevitably become more important to the institution than those that have not. This is partly because they are more visible to the PTB, as the activity is closer to them, and so flows more fully and easily through the institution's bloodstream, and partly because there is now a greater administrative investment. The more the investment, the more important the activity. That is how – remember where we started – that what was generally accepted as the most important (and enjoyable!) activity, buttering toast, came to be replaced by the less important (and less enjoyable) one of folding napkins. It would probably not have been intentional (except perhaps to the occasional napkin folding fanatic), but is an almost inevitable consequence of centralisation through centralisability in a system that, by and large, has thrived and flourished on local independ-

ence – Cambridge (and Oxford) perhaps being prime examples.

These thoughts have been prompted by watching my university transform itself from a dynamic and distributed network of toast-butterers, into a less happy and less successful (although that's a bit of a napkin-folding assessment based on league tables) body of napkin folders. They were perhaps crystallised by a friend sending me an old article from 2012 by Kurt Eichewald in *Vanity Fair*, on the decline of Microsoft. Towards the end there is a comment from Steve Jobs on the failure years of Apple –

“The company starts valuing the great salesmen, because they’re the ones who can move the needle on revenues, not the product engineers and designers. So the salespeople end up running the company.... [Then] the product guys don’t matter so much, and a lot of them just turn off.”

In universities it is not the salespeople, but (and this is shared with salespeople) those most visible to the centre, the ones immediately seen to be having an effect on whatever needle is being watched, who become valued, and more peripheral people, even if they are the actual drivers

of the institution's success, become increasingly invisible. That sense of being invisible to the people at the top of the university did not seem to exist so much when I started, but now I think is an implicit perception amongst many. And being invisible tends to lower morale unless you happen to be in a superhero film.

As in my previous notes in this series, I do not have easy solutions, but recognising the problem is a starting point. One possible improvement might be to stop the drift towards seeing the activities of academics falling into three different realms – teaching, research and administration. This implies an equivalence, but is in fact a categorical confusion between ends and means. Teaching and research are our core activities, and anything else we do – as indeed we must – should clearly be seen as a means to those ends. Toast buttering is the end (or even eating the toast), and the napkins a way of minimising the resulting mess, but they are not an end in themselves.

Perhaps napkin folding is our inevitable destiny, but I hope people still at least eat buttered toast at the weekend.

¹ Powers That Be

Not
the
Gazette

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

The next issue of Oxford
Magazine will appear in
noughth week

REVIEWS

Surveillance States

Carmen Bugar, *Poetry and the Language of Oppression* (OUP, 2021)



When in the acknowledgements to Carmen Bugar's *Poetry and the Language of Oppression* the archivist of the former Romanian secret police is thanked "for giving me access to the archive of surveillance documents on my family and for reassuring me that I can publish the entirety of the archive", you know you're reading an extraordinary book.

A political protestor against the Ceaușescu regime, Bugar's father was branded an enemy of the state, imprisoned, and his family placed under constant surveillance. It's moving to read that Bugar's response to these developments was to write poems, "filling [her father's] absence with an imagined presence of my father drawn from memory":

"I gave the poems to my mother and my sister to read quietly, so that the secret of our feelings was not recorded by the microphones we knew were placed around our house: thus our desire for happiness and stability was preserved. Poetry – its rhythmical, incantational language – brought consolation into our lives, working its song against the grain of the language of helplessness".

She adds that poetry "was a fluent reminder that despite the handicapping language of betrayal, we were whole people who were still capable of feeling". I find it immensely powerful that people trapped in a situation that can deprive us of the things that make us human, recovered themselves through poetry.

Such redemptive insights would be nothing were they not confronted with the worst realities of life under Ceaușescu's rule: her father told her of how he was kept in underground cells without daylight, yet the prisoners would use whatever tools they could to write – the soles of their shoes, "soap, matches discarded by guards in the courtyard, saliva, and dust from the walls of their cells".

And so, in spite of everything, they were able to lecture to each other, her father teaching his fellow prisoners how to make a transistor. And the poets were writing their work into pieces of soap. So it was that "poetry, like a ray of inner light, is born in the darkest places where literally, and figuratively, light is blocked out".

I'm full of admiration for those students of mine who have learnt English as a second language before reading poetry with me – I have one at the moment, from Russia. Bugar

came to America with no command of the language, an experience she found "deeply alienating", but proceeded to write poetry in the language of her adoptive homeland that demonstrates a mastery not just of linguistic conventions but of poetic ones.

The poems reprinted here are in their different ways remarkable but nothing can beat "The Divorce" for its combination of emotional power and linguistic restraint. It's one of the most memorable modern poems of witness I have read.

At one point Bugar says "my work is concerned with government oppression and its impact on family" – beautifully put, and, once again, its restraint is what distinguishes it. For what she doesn't say is that her experiences must have been profoundly disturbing. She returned to Romania in July 2010, having been granted access to secret police files on her family – all 4,500 pages, which she read.

How many could handle the weird experience of reading secret police files that documented, in detail, the speech, the comings and goings, of oneself and one's family? Or, moreover, that of reading remarks uttered, or deeds done, which one had completely forgotten? "While I feel fine as a person who has suffered memory loss, how am I supposed to deal with seeing myself as a character in someone else's official version of my life which I cannot verify? More troubling still is to read accounts of events that have taken place in my family while I was absent".

I find Bugar's analysis of the role played by poetry in her survival to be honest and truthful – and to achieve that is itself a kind of miracle. It has been the making of her. "The poet who is a victim engages directly with oppression in order to rid his or her private language of it", she writes.

There are times when she reminds me vividly of Joseph Brodsky in *Less Than One*, his remarkable collection of essays that sets out with a similar aim. Bugar's great virtue is that, as a translator of her own work, she is faultless, unfailingly sensitive to the nuances of language, as "The Divorce" and "A Birthday Letter" show. You can feel the extent to which the book is driven by a burden of responsibility towards other victims of oppression; as Seamus Heaney put it, she is driven by a feeling of "solidarity with the doomed".

This is in every way a stunning volume by an utterly remarkable writer.

DUNCAN WU

On Academic Freedom

Review of J.C. Hermanowicz (Ed), *Challenges to Academic Freedom* (2021, The Johns Hopkins University Press, p/bk, 300pp)



In our OUP *Very Short Introduction to Universities and College* (2017) Paul Temple and I discussed 'academic freedom' (pp103-108), and commented:

'There is much said and written but little really understood about the concept of academic freedom... The concept of academic freedom is controversial, being more narrowly interpreted by some as simply a protection from external interference for the academic guild going about its professional task of seeking and disseminating truth in a scholarly way. Others promote it in grand (and even grandiose) terms as a licence for academics to critique anything and everything... In essence, the further the individual academic strays from his or her subject expertise and/or begins to express opinions in an unscholarly way and politically partisan fashion, the less the protective device of academic freedom can be invoked... [and he/she] is then left relying on the general free speech rights of any citizen.' And such rights, even within a university, can lawfully be constrained by an employer and so: 'In short, the idea of academic freedom does not extend as widely as many faculty assume and does not make them as exceptional or privileged as most would like.'

This stimulating collection of essays well illustrates in several of the case-studies just how far some academics (of the right and of the left) drift from professional and scholarly legitimate activity in terms of being under the umbrella of academic freedom and end up sounding off in an intellectually incontinent way on social media, and are then indignant when their employer disciplines them for engaging in a 'twitter storm' (by when, usually, several hundred academic from across the globe have sign letters of protest as to how badly Bloggs is being treated by his/her wickedly corporatist neoliberal university).

One author points out that threats to academic freedom can also be internal via a university's policies, identifying: 'The problem of doctrinal conformity... [especially] by way of 'diversity statements' which faculty are required either to sign or to submit as part of the job application process' (a matter addressed in the last issue of the *Oxford Magazine* when the University's recent proposals to insert into selection for academic posts an EDI criterion alongside the traditional criteria of Research and of

Teaching were challenged – it seems that the University might now have retreated?).

The Editor (a Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia) provides an excellent overview in a well-written ‘Introduction’ – usefully and crucially reminding us that the AAUP statement of the tenets of academic freedom sets out limitations on the concept; viz: ‘Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, BUT should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject...’ (emphasis added). As Stanley Fish puts it: be professional in sticking to the lectern and do not mount the soap-box; pedagogy and not ideology!

Similarly, when faculty ‘write as citizens... their special position in the community imposes special obligations [given they are ‘scholars and educational officers’ and hence] they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of

others, AND should make every effort to indicate they are not speaking for the institution.’ (again, emphasis added). All that wise guidance is, of course, ignored once academics (happily and hitherto only in certain disciplines) enter the ‘twitter-storm’ and jump on passing bandwagons.

Hermanowicz stresses ‘the pursuit of knowledge, not the doling out of opinion, is the province of higher education institutions’ and ‘defensible speech in an academic context is speech (and writing) that satisfies professional standards’ ‘Academic freedom is a freedom constrained by professional norms.’ And this ‘quality’ of ‘possessing truth and certified by a learned community’ is the crucial difference between academic freedom and freedom of speech: the former demands professionalism and accuracy, completeness, relevance, respect for truth; the latter can be mere opinion, just sounding off, simply jumping on bandwagons, enthusiastically signing petitions.

He also identifies another internal threat to academic freedom – asking ‘is the professoriate dependable’ in defending academic freedom? And finding that ‘faculty apathy’ means it is not, neither now nor in the past – and not least because of all the confusion as to just what is academic freedom and just how it relates to campus free speech.

This splendid book helps academics think through such confusion, but I fear their apathy means very few will ever bother to do so while some won’t want to lest doing so might impede their jumping on bandwagons, signing letters of protest, and dragging into their class-rooms substantial soap-boxes.

DAVID PALFREYMAN

David Palfreyman is a Member of the OfS Board but writes here in a purely personal capacity

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author’s name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

Virtual Heath

The Scottish play leaks over the proscenium
as characters infiltrate the orchestra,
assess the actors interpreting them, and disperse

to their lives before the drama's done, leaving
those who portrayed them tongue-tied and frozen
in front of the curtain, a tableau vivant. The words,

too, freeze and fragment (*nature's germens tumble
... together ... Confusion ... made his masterpiece ...
eye of newt ... for a charm of powerful trouble ...*)

Meanwhile, the crones brew up their new personae,
Heather 1, 2, and 3, and crouch behind
these handles, in the virtual heath of social

media. Reborn as founders of a long
line of conspiracy mongers, stretching far
into the future (*Hail! Hail! Hail!*), they've smuggled

out, from page and stage, potent digital spells
for our riddled-with-rumors world, via their laptops.
Weird cyber-sisters, they are equipped to allure

lone travelers (now Internet surfers) with grievance
parlance, abetted by emoticons,
emojis, and beckoning logos: *You're Being Lied To*;

Your Ignorance Is Their Power; and, simply, *Q*.

Breakout

They walk among us, eloquent in their silence
but unrecognized in the crowd, Bartleby, Lady
Macbeth, et al., and the only evidence
is left behind on the unstable paper,
troubled by tremors — the words piled up in the margins
beside the pagination, like a discarded
garment, shmatah of language, torn uniform
in the paced about cell of a page. Another fictional
breakout into the real, across the unguarded
border, which is surprisingly close and at hand,
though it goes totally unmonitored,
and *we* pay the rising cost of unreality.

A Lucid Dream

Yes, I've often answered, the gods will still
manifest themselves, although in diminished forms
and less imposing formats, as befitting
an age whose beliefs adhere to a range of techniques
for boosting spiritual stimulation.

Hence this story I like to tell in connection
with the practice of what we call, lucid dreaming.
But first, notice you're all equipped with a rocker
and note how I impel mine gently, so,
balancing a book on my knees as I lull
myself to sleep. See how the book will slide
to the floor with a thud that half awakens me
— just quickly illustrating — and transports
me into the state of lucid dreaming, neither
asleep nor awake but primed for a visitation.
Now for the story.

Duly rocking, I dropped
the book and startled beheld a figure I instantly
knew to have been a great one, but now stooped
and narrow-shouldered introduced himself
as Dr. A. S. Klepius, a bespectacled
appointee as a small state's medical chief.
Despite his nondescript appearance, he burned
with a fervency that must have been vestigial
as he explained his "plan to combine Broadway
and Bellevue in a grand healing center
of theaters and hospital, a veritable
sanctuary of therapeutic relief
in a time of acute public strife and stress,
tragedy purging a patient of fear and pity
as medicine treated his body. We need a snake
cult," he confided (ironically?). "Epi-
daurus," he hissed. "Not to mention a national
chorus, to give passionate form to the daily
chatter as well as the creeping catastrophe.
On tv they could dance in the chyron, fortunate
name, choreographing arrogance, moral blindness,
and demagoguery, like those who perform
with fingers and gestures to sign for the deaf."

I was charmed,
I confess, although beginners must not expect
such coherent visions, at least not immediately.
But you're here in good faith, and always I hold out hope.
Be sure you retain your receipt, and as I say,
we will rock our frets and fears to sleep and let
truth blossom from the loam of a lucid dream.

PHILIP FRIED

Philip Fried has published eight volumes of poetry, most recently *Among The Gliesians* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 2020). His work has appeared in many US and UK literary journals, and Carol Rumens included his poem "Yoga for Leaders and Others" in her anthology *Smart Devices: 52 Poems From The Guardian's 'Poem Of The Week.'*

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